

News Release

Senator Pete V. Domenici

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SENATE APPROVES \$85 MILLION IN EMERGENCY FUNDING FOR LOS ALAMOS NATIONAL LAB FIRE RECOVERY EFFORT

Supplemental Funding Package Now Goes to Conference

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today confirmed that the U.S. Senate has approved \$85 million in immediate emergency funding to help Los Alamos National Laboratory begin to recover from the worst wildfire in New Mexico history.

The funding was today approved as a Domenici-authored amendment to the FY2001 Military Construction Appropriations Bill, which now contains emergency supplemental funding for national defense activities in FY2000. A conference committee will now work to resolve differences in the Senate and House-passed versions of the Military Construction Appropriations Bill. Senator Jeff Bingaman supported the amendment.

"This amendment is designed to provide the first installment of resources to assist the laboratory on its road to recovery from the disastrous Cerro Grande Fire," Domenici said. "The cost of restoring the laboratory to full operations will undoubtedly grow as LANL discovers further conditions upon reopening and restarting facilities and buildings, but this emergency funding is a good start."

"We need to start the long process of bringing normalcy back to everyone's lives in Los Alamos. These funds will help get the lab up and running so the scientists and experts can get back to the important work they do on behalf of all Americans," Bingaman said.

Domenici chairs the Senate Energy and Water Development Appropriations Subcommittee which funds the Department of Energy and its national laboratory facilities. He developed his amendment in consultation with LANL and DOE officials, as well as Senate Appropriations Committee Chairman Senator Ted Stevens, R-Alaska, who toured the fire site Sunday at Domenici's request.

The \$85 million identified by the lab would be used to restart facilities, strengthen and replenish fire protection, address environmental protection issues, and start clean up associated with fire damage.

In addition to aid for LANL, Domenici and Bingaman today met with White House Chief of Staff John Podesta and Jack Lew, director of the Office of Management and Budget, who agreed to work with the New Mexico congressional delegation on a package

of aid to compensate people for direct losses caused by the Cerro Grande Fire.

Last week, the Senate Appropriations Committee approved Domenici's request for \$143 million in emergency DOE defense funding, \$70 million of which is targeted for work at LANL and Sandia National Laboratories.

The \$70 million currently in the bill, none of which was requested by the Clinton Administration, was negotiated by Domenici and Stevens. This funding includes: \$20 million to keep pit production on schedule at Los Alamos National Laboratory; \$17 million for support of critical personnel and weapons activities at Sandia National Laboratories; \$13 million for upgrades to the Transportation Safeguards Division based in Albuquerque to address its "marginal" security rating; and, \$20 million to begin implementation of cyber-security upgrades at the most critical areas of the three weapons laboratories.